



Bill Destler receives the presidential collar of authority from Board of Trustees members Christine Whitman and Donald Boyce '67 during his inauguration Nov. 9. To read President Bill Destler's inaugural address or learn more, visit [www.rit.edu/president](http://www.rit.edu/president).

# Focused on innovation

## President Bill Destler champions RIT's 'unfair advantage'

Less than six months after arriving at RIT, Bill Destler continues to be amazed by what he finds.

"I know of nothing like RIT," Destler often tells alumni, faculty, staff, students, even the media. "You simply will not find an institution with as much momentum. It really is a national treasure."

Destler spent 34 years at the University of Maryland, most recently as senior vice president for academic affairs and provost. As an outsider with a fresh view, he is intrigued by what he calls a "collision of the right brain and left brain" at RIT.

"Where else do you have electrical engineering and computer science students

rubbing elbows with photographers and artists? We are not going to try to be the next Stanford or Berkeley," he says. "We're going to basically continue to be the unusual place we are, and try to do it better. That makes it a lot of fun."

RIT's unique program mix and the diversity provided by the National Technical Institute for the Deaf give the university the potential to become a national center of creativity and innovation unlike any other, says Destler. "Indeed, RIT has an unfair advantage!"

It has been an exhilarating few months for Destler. He's toured key facilities and labs throughout the campus. He often eats lunch in the Student Alumni Union,



Bill Destler receives his orange RIT jacket from Student Government President Ed Wolf at the President's Alumni Ball in October.

chatting with students, faculty and staff. He's met with key international, federal

## What people are saying about President Destler:



Bill Destler answers questions during an interview segment on RIT radio station WITR.



"President Destler is demonstrating leadership and vision in his role as a president. I am confident that he will make a lot of progress at RIT. I am confident in his vision to enhance innovation at the university, particularly with the students."

Kimberly Baribeau Andersen '85 (medical technology), West Lebanon, N.H.



"President Destler is proud, excited and committed to taking the institute to the next level. RIT is on the right track and the new president wants RIT to get more exposure, which is the right thing. . . . In terms of advice, RIT

should stick with the concept of utilizing alumni to get out to the high schools and promote the institute."

Gary S. Avratin, '89 (business administration, management), Sharon, Mass.

"President Destler has the talent and skills, both as a campus leader and community voice, to pick up effectively where President Simone left off. . . . He should strengthen the technology-transfer effort so RIT innovators can create new businesses here. And he should strive, along with all local college presidents, to bring students more into the life of the Rochester community. . . . Destler spoke of embracing innovation and fresh ideas. It's a winning direction for his school and this community."

Sept. 7 editorial, Rochester Democrat and Chronicle.

"It has quickly become clear that William Destler has no shortage of ideas. . . . Two aspects are particularly worth noting. First, his plan to make RIT 'a national center of creativity and innovation.' Second, his goal of making RIT a place where companies of all sizes can carry out short- and medium-term corporate research and development projects. . . . This is taking the partnership of business and the university to a new level!"

Sept. 7 editorial, Rochester Business Journal.



Bill Destler and his wife, Rebecca Johnson, donned orange RIT shirts to greet first-year students and their families during orientation.

and state officials. He's met with influential CEOs. And he's met with media outlets.

But one of his biggest priorities is meeting with alumni. He is visiting alumni in 30 cities across the nation.

"RIT has had incredible support from the Rochester business community for most of its history. RIT grew from the needs of the community," says Destler. "But as we move forward, we need the support of our alumni."

This fall, Destler took his message on the road.

"You will be hard pressed to find another institution that has grown to more than 260 degree programs since the mid-1950s," he tells alumni. "What other uni-

versity has built more than 200 buildings since 1968? RIT has an amazing story to tell. And we need you to tell your children, your friends and your children's friends about this story. We need your advocacy, for our alumni to be ambassadors. By working together, we can really make RIT the nation's first innovation university."

Now it's on to San Francisco, San Jose, Austin, Dallas, Phoenix, Florida, Chicago. . .

Bob Finnerty '07

### **W** Web extra:

For photo galleries of Destler's first months at RIT and his inauguration, go to [www.rit.edu/news](http://www.rit.edu/news) and click on "Photo Gallery Archive."

## What people are saying about President Destler:

“An artist himself – Dr. Destler plays the banjo and guitar and has an astounding collection of both – it seemed as if he and RIT were two of the same. Both split in half: one part engineer, one part artist. Each highly focused on innovation and entrepreneurship – uniquely quirky once you get to know them. The affable charm that exudes from Dr. Destler is likely the secret to his popularity at Maryland and will probably be his herald in Rochester.”

Reporter magazine  
(Cover photo by Dave Londres, fourth-year photojournalism major)



“Dr. Destler is deeply committed to the success and improvement of our university. He has immersed himself within the community and continually reaches out to see what is going on. During his short tenure, he and his wife have had lunch on multiple occasions in the SAU cafeteria and attend campus events. Its refreshing to know that Dr. Destler genuinely cares about RIT students and faculty/staff members. He takes the time to listen and ask questions.

“The most valuable thing people appreciate and respect about a leader is the ability to listen. Dr. Destler has the drive to make this university a true ‘national treasure,’ but in order to do so, he needs to listen to not only his immediate vice presidents, but students and faculty and staff members. It’s important to remember that sometimes the greatest ideas come from unexpected places.”

Ed Wolf, president  
Sasha Malinchoc, vice president  
RIT Student Government



Top: Destler talks to staffers during lunch at the SAU cafeteria.

Above: Destler chats with members of RIT’s Formula SAE engineering team.

Left: Bill Destler and his wife, Rebecca Johnson, get an American Sign Language lesson from interpreter Sam Holcomb '77 at Liberty Hill.

## Destler on the road

During the coming months, President Destler will be meeting with alumni and friends around the country. For locations and times visit [www.rit.edu/alumniactivities](http://www.rit.edu/alumniactivities) and click on your region. Check the Regional Alumni Activities section (page 34) in this magazine for additional information.

Jan. 9, Austin, Texas  
Jan. 11, Dallas, Texas  
Jan. 12, Phoenix, Ariz.  
Feb. 22, South Florida  
Feb. 23, Central Florida  
March 12, Raleigh-Durham, N.C.

March 13, Atlanta, Ga.  
March 27, Detroit, Mich.  
April 29, Chicago, Ill.  
April 30, Los Angeles, Calif.  
May 1, San Diego, Calif.